



Management of Fire in Our Forest and Rural Landscape Conference 2025 Outcomes

Tāngata Matatau Incorporated's (TM) key objective is to bring together individuals, organisations, and agencies associated with fire services, land management, industry, commerce, and emergency management, drawing on the collective skill base of the membership to provide constructive, influential, and expert advice, to shape desired outcomes for the sector. One way to achieve this desired outcome is to hold stakeholder conferences.

The Land Managers Chapter of TM held a 2025 Management of Fire in Our Forest and Rural Landscape Conference at the Haere-Roa Conference Centre in Christchurch from July 9 to 11, 2025. The conference concentrated on rebuilding connections and improving outcomes in the management of fire within forest and rural landscapes. It provided a platform for sharing knowledge, encouraging collaboration, and addressing challenges in forest and rural fire management. Key topics included:

- International and New Zealand forest fire case studies.
- The role of contractors and volunteers in rural fire management.
- Training, fire services delivery, and stakeholder engagement.
- Forest fire protection challenges.
- Advances in integrated fire management and governance frameworks.

The conference structure featured keynote international speakers, panel discussions, and workshop, emphasising innovation, coordination, and capacity building to enhance fire resilience and response.

The three-day conference was deemed a success by attendees, and the attached document summarises the conference's findings. These findings include:

- 1) A High-Level Conference Steering Committee Statement on Conference Outcome; and
- 2) Conference Workshop Outputs

We would encourage these findings to be shared with your colleagues and industry stakeholders who were not in a position to attend this conference.

Murray Dudfield
Chair
2025 Conference Steering Committee

High-Level Conference Steering Committee Statement on Conference Outcome:

Strengthening Landscape Fire Governance through Partnership and National Coordination

Conference participants expressed strong and consistent support for a more collaborative, inclusive, and nationally coordinated approach to managing fire across New Zealand's forest and rural landscapes.

Reflecting the principles set out in the FAO Fire Management: Voluntary Guidelines and the 8th International Wildland Fire Conference (IWFC) Landscape Fire Governance Framework, there is a clear call for a rural fire management system grounded in good governance, shared responsibility, risk reduction, and community engagement.

Participants strongly endorsed the establishment of an independent national interagency body to oversee rural fire training, standards, and both international and domestic deployments. The governance of this body should ensure balanced representation from government agencies, land management organisations, and industry sectors, aligning with the FAO's emphasis on multi-stakeholder engagement and inclusive institutional arrangements.

A strong emphasis was placed on shared governance, mutual accountability, and respect for local autonomy—principles echoed in both the FAO Guidelines and the IWFC Framework. Participants stressed the need for a practical and nationally consistent training framework, co-designed with sector partners and tailored to landscape and risk, as well as the importance of retaining rural fire expertise and better integrating forestry contractors into national preparedness and response systems.

Echoing the IWFC's call for integrated landscape fire governance, participants highlighted the need for:

- Clear communication and inter-agency planning;
- Coherent national standards that support local flexibility;
- Partnerships with rural communities; and
- A systemic shift towards risk reduction and sustainable fire management practices.

Overall, the responses reflect a united desire for a transparent, integrated, and operationally ready forest and rural fire management system that respects the diverse values of the landscape, empowers local knowledge, and builds long-term resilience through coordinated national leadership.

Conference Workshop Outputs

The following summarises the responses given by conference participants to the eight Conference Workshop Session Questions.

Summary of Responses to Workshop Question 1:

Should we advocate for a national interagency organisation (to cover training, deployments, and auditing)?

There is strong support for creating an independent national interagency organisation to coordinate wildfire training, deployment, and auditing. Most respondents favour a collaborative, independent body with equal representation from FENZ, forestry, DOC, and other land and resource management agencies. The reasoning is clear: New Zealand's current system lacks cohesion, consistent standards, and proper integration of non-FENZ partners, especially industry contractors and regional responders.

Submitters emphasised the need for a central, yet streamlined, entity that promotes shared outcomes, ensures accountability, and improves operational readiness. Some suggest a governance-level solution rather than creating a new operational structure, proposing an improved or restructured governance group with independent oversight.

A minority express scepticism, suggesting either that FENZ already has this mandate and should be held accountable, or that the focus should stay on improving existing structures rather than building new ones.

Overall, the consensus favours developing a national interagency model, but with careful attention to ensuring equal voice, operational authority, regional flexibility, and industry inclusion as a paid partner, rather than creating unnecessary bureaucracy or centralising decision-making at the cost of local needs.

Summary of Responses to Workshop Question 2:

How do we communicate, collaborate, and co-operate to improve outcomes?

There is a strong and consistent demand for more structured, inclusive, and transparent collaboration in the wildfire and rural fire management sectors. Respondents highlight that effective communication, collaboration, and cooperation require more than just ad hoc efforts — they need systemic, accountable, and deliberate processes.

Key themes include:

- Regular interagency meetings and joint planning are essential ways to ensure alignment.
- Genuine representation and acknowledgment of all stakeholders — especially rural fire, forestry, iwi Māori, and district-level voices — with many emphasising that meaningful engagement must begin from the top of the system, including political recognition and backing.
- A call for mandatory involvement, not optional consultation, to make sure that key rural and forestry partners are actively involved and empowered.
- Incorporating forestry resources and stakeholders into planning and operational systems, supported by clear contractual commitments rather than informal agreements.

- The importance of open, honest, and timely communication, with a focus on listening to differing opinions, building trust, and honouring local autonomy.

Several responses suggest utilising existing forums (e.g., Wood Councils, LACs, national conferences), while others recommend creating new or strengthening coordination roles, possibly independent of FENZ, to support and manage collaboration.

In summary, improved outcomes depend on making collaboration a strategic and operational priority — supported by inclusive structures, clear expectations, and respectful engagement at all levels, from local to national.

Summary of Responses to Workshop Question 3:

Is it solely FENZ's responsibility to deliver wildfire specific training and equipment? What can the industry do to support this?

This is a well-informed and critical response that advocates for shared governance, revitalisation of training systems, and more inclusive collaboration across the sector. It recognises FENZ's leadership role but strongly supports decentralisation, broader industry participation, and updated national qualifications. There is a clear sense of frustration with the current situation and a desire for FENZ to return to the original spirit of partnership envisioned at its founding.

The sector is calling for a more balanced approach to wildfire training and capability development: one that respects FENZ's leadership but empowers the broader industry through shared planning, updated standards, and open access.

Summary of Responses to Workshop Question 4:

How can we work together to retain skilled rural fire managers in the sector?

The responses to the question provide a comprehensive and insightful collective perspective.

The responses are carefully coordinated, reflecting a shared concern about the decline of rural fire expertise and a collective desire for structural reform, inclusive leadership, and cultural change. The insights go beyond simple retention methods—they advocate for a systemic shift toward valuing and integrating rural fire skills and knowledge throughout the sector.

This feedback provides a solid foundation for action planning and indicates that stakeholders are ready to collaborate more closely—if pathways, recognition, and resources are properly aligned.

Summary of Responses to Workshop Question 5:

How can we work together to ensure a pool of forestry contractors are trained to an acceptable and consistent standard to support FENZ?

The responses to the question reflect a desire for mutual accountability, standardisation, and stronger integration between FENZ and the forestry sector.

The responses show a practical but partnership-oriented outlook. There's acknowledgment that contractor capability mostly exists, but FENZ needs to improve coordination, formalisation, and support for this workforce through training programs, ongoing engagement, and respect for the forestry sector knowledge.

Importantly, the call to reframe the relationship—from “training contractors for FENZ” to jointly building interoperable capability—is a vital insight. Success will depend on co-designing

standards, creating mutual training opportunities, and clearly defining roles and expectations across both sectors.

Summary of Responses to Workshop Question 6:

How can we ensure there are sufficient contractors available to support volunteers at large incidents?

The responses to the question reflect a broad consensus on the need for collaboration, standardisation, and practical engagement.

Overall, the responses show a desire for a cohesive, sector-wide approach — with established standards, mutual investment, and respect for existing capabilities — to develop and sustain a skilled, effective pool of forestry contractors in rural fire response.

Summary of Responses to Workshop Question 7:

What does a multiagency competency framework look like with a rural and land management context?

The responses to the question reflect a shared desire for a collaborative, practical, and inclusive system that is fit for purpose and recognises the realities of rural fire and land management.

The main idea is a shared, practical framework created through inclusive and collaborative planning, aligned with global best practices, and based on the real-world needs of rural fire and land management stakeholders.

Overall, the responses call for a revitalised, inclusive, nationally aligned competency framework, grounded in real-world rural and land management needs, and adaptable to both local and international standards. Success depends on shared governance, clarity, and practicality.

Summary of Responses to Workshop Question 8:

What is the stewardship for forestry?

The responses to the question, as interpreted by respondents, with an apparent emphasis on stewardship and broader landscape risk, reflect varied understandings of the question.

While there is divergence in interpretation, the responses collectively suggest that:

- Effective contractor training and fire readiness requires a holistic, landscape-scale approach.
- It should include shared responsibility, local community involvement, practical risk mitigation, and inclusive governance.
- To succeed, FENZ and the sector must engage beyond contractors — with landowners, communities, iwi, and political decision-makers.